

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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ISU Press Release

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ISU believes that the European Commission's antitrust allegations are unfounded

The International Skating Union (ISU) is surprised by the news that the European Commission has adopted a "Statement of Objections" in the course of its antitrust investigation of the ISU's eligibility rules prohibiting Skaters from participating in unauthorized events that are not on the ISU international calendar.

The adoption of the Statement of Objections by the European Commission is just one of the stages of the antitrust investigation and does not imply that the ISU is responsible or liable for any violation of EU antitrust legislation. The ISU will review the Statement of Objections with care and will respond fully to any allegation of anti-competitive conduct. The ISU believes the claims made by the European Commission to be unfounded.

Any allegation that the ISU's rules are somehow anti-competitive appears to be based on a misplaced understanding of the governance structure of sport and the Olympic movement. The European Union's founding Treaty as well as the EU institutions have long recognized the autonomous governance structure of sport as being essential to the protection of the integrity, safety and health in sport. These rules benefit sports organizers, sportspersons and spectators.

The ISU reiterates that independent organizers are able to organize international tournaments on the ISU international calendar. Indeed, the ISU recently authorized an event in the Netherlands to be co-organized by Icederby – the organization which initiated the complaint through two Dutch Skaters. As such, there is no basis for the Commission's claim that organizers are foreclosed from the market.

It appears then that the European Commission has failed to take adequate account of the importance of the legitimate objectives pursued by the ISU's eligibility rules. A neoliberal and deregulated approach to sport could destroy the Olympic values underpinning sport. The ISU will show that the specific nature of sports governance as applied in its rules is perfectly compliant with EU competition law.